

FRAN

BY
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
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SYNOPSIS.

Fran arrives at Hamilton. Gregory's home in Littleburg, but finds him absent conducting the choir at a camp meeting. She repairs thither in search of him, laughs during the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of schools, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells her Gregory is a wealthy man, deeply interested in charity work, and a pillar of the church. Ashton becomes greatly interested in Fran and while taking leave of her, holds her hand and is seen by Sapphira Clinton, sister of Robert Clinton, chairman of the school board. Fran tells Gregory she wants a home with him. Grace Noir, Gregory's private secretary, takes a violent dislike to Fran and advises her to go away at once. Fran hints at a twenty-year-old secret, and Gregory in agitation asks Grace to leave the room. Fran relates the story of how Gregory married a young girl at Springfield, while attending college and then deserted her. Fran is the child of that marriage. Gregory had married his present wife three years before the death of Fran's mother. Fran takes a liking to Mrs. Gregory. Gregory explains that Fran is the daughter of a very dear friend who is dead. Fran agrees to the story. Mrs. Gregory insists on her making her home with them and takes her to her room. It is decided that Fran must go to school. Grace shows persistent interest in Gregory's story of his dead friend and hints that Fran may be an impostor. Fran declares that the secretary must go. Grace begins hazing tactics in an effort to drive Fran from the Gregory home, but Mrs. Gregory remains staunch in her friendship. Ashton is ordered before Superintendent Ashton to be punished for insubordination in school. Chairman Clinton is present. The affair ends in Fran leaving the school in company of the two men to the amusement of the school-mongers of the town. Abbott, while taking a walk alone at midnight, finds Fran on a bridge telling her fortune by cards. She tells Abbott that she is the famous Bon tamer, Fran Nonpareil. She tired of circus life and sought a home. Grace tells of seeing Fran come home after midnight with a man. She guesses part of the story and surprises the rest from Abbott.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

"Oh," Grace exclaimed, disagreeably surprised. "I did not know that you play cards, Professor Ashton. Do you also attend the dances? Surely you haven't been dancing and playing cards very long?"

"Not for a great while," responded Abbott, with the obsequy of a good conscience wrongfully accused.

"Only since Fran came, I am sure," she said, feeling him escaping. She looked at him with something like scorn, inspired by righteous indignation that such as he could be influenced by Fran. That look wrought havoc with the halo he had so long blinked at, as it swung above her head.

"Does that mean," he inquired, with a steady look, "that you imagine Fran has led me into bad habits?"

"I trust the habits are not fixed," rather contemptuously. "I hardly think you mean to desert the church, and lose your position at school, for the sake of—of that Fran."

"I hardly think so, either," returned Abbott. "And now I'd better go to my school work."

"Fran is imprudent," said Mrs. Gregory, in distress, "but her heart is pure gold. I don't know what all this means, but when I have had a talk with her—"

"Don't go, Professor Ashton," interposed Grace, as he started up, "until you advise me. Shall I tell Mr. Gregory? Or shall I conceal it on the assurance that it will never happen again?"

Abbott seated himself with sudden persuasiveness. "Conceal it, Miss Grace, conceal it!" he urged.

"If you will frankly explain what happened—here before Mrs. Gregory, so she can have the real truth, we will never betray the secret. But if you cannot tell everything, I shall feel it my duty—I don't know how Mrs. Gregory feels about it—but I must tell Mr. Gregory."

"I would rather wait," said Mrs. Gregory, "and talk to Fran. She will promise me anything. I trust you, Abbott; I know you would never lead my little girl into wrongdoing. Leave it all to me. I will have a good talk with Fran."

"And," said Abbott eagerly, "if we both solemnly promise—"

Grace bit her lip. His "we" condemned him.

"I don't ask you to hide the affair on my account," he said, holding up his head. "I don't want Fran put in an unjust light. She isn't to be judged like other people."

"Oh," murmured Grace, "then you think there is more than one standard of right? I don't. There's one God and one right. No, I cannot consent; what might satisfy Mrs. Gregory might not seem best to me. No, professor, if you feel that you cannot explain what I saw last night, I shall feel obliged to tell Mr. Gregory as soon as the choir practice ends."

STRIKE WON IN 20 MINUTES

Union Is Formed and Disbanded Within Short Time After Cause Is Won.

A story comes from Sydney of a union that was formed, strike declared and won, the union dissolved, all inside of 20 minutes.

The strike was of theatergoers in Mt. Gambier, in South Australia, and was against the management of a barn-storming troupe.

The management asked two shillings for admission to the show, but the prospective audience refused to pay more than one shilling, and after a hasty consultation outside the theater formed a theatergoers' union.

Pickets were stationed and within a few minutes 275 persons—practically all who were there—had agreed not to pay the two shillings.

The manager appeared at the doorway and refused to make the required reduction.

"I'll give you till I count 20," said the president of the union, "and after that our price will be sixpence instead

of one shilling." He counted slowly to nine, when the manager capitulated. The strike was declared at an end, the union dissolved and the strikers trooped into the hall.—New York Tribune.

Reserving a Seat.

"Why don't you let the people in?" suggested Mr. Justice Joyce in trying to solve the Paladium queue tangle. This would be putting the theatrical clock back. In the seventeenth century doors were opened long before the curtain rose. Peeps, for instance, patronized the pit: "To the playhouse at a little past 12 to get a good place in the pit . . . and then, getting a poor man to keep my place, I out and spent an hour at Martin's, my book-seller's, and so, back again, when I found the house quite full. But I had my place."—London Chronicle.

Queer Uses for the Crows.

The crows in nowadays held to justify its existence by its beauty, but in bygone centuries it was cultivated with an eye to profit—its saffron being in high demand both as an

aromatic and as a flavoring for cakes and pies. A distinction of crows blossoms, also, was held to be good for strengthening the lungs and heart, and as a preventive of plague. Evidence of the flower's commercial value survives in the name of the chief center of its cultivation. Saffron Walden, and saffron nowadays is appreciated only by the sparrows, who wreck the crows to obtain it.

"Lorna Doone's" Popularity. Richard Blackmore's romance, "Lorna Doone," was by no means a success on its first publication. The public gave it but grudging approval, and like many another good novel, it might have hovered on the verge of oblivion but for the opportune marriage of the Marquis of Lorne. Then, for the first time, did the initial word of the book's title, "Lorna," catch the eye of the public, who, imagining that it must have reference to the queen's son-in-law, rushed to get a copy, which it made no reference to the Argyle family, afforded in its charming Devonshire story ample compensation to its purchasers.

"I am your friend, too, Fran." "My friend, too!" she echoed bitterly. "Oh, thanks—also!" Abbott came through the gate, and tried to read her face. "Does the fact that I am your friend condemn me?" "No—just classifies you. You couldn't be her friend if you were not a mirror in which she sees herself; her conscience is so sure, that she hasn't use for anything but a faithful reflector of her opinions."

"Her friends are more puppets, it appears," Abbott said, smiling. "But that's rather to her credit, isn't it? Would you mind to explain your imagination of her character?"

His jesting tone made her impatient. "I don't think her character has ever had a chance to develop; she's too fixed on thinking herself what she isn't. Her opinion of what she ought to be is so sure, that she has never discovered what she really is. And you can't possibly hold a secret from her, if you're her friend; she takes it from you as one snatches a toy from a little child."

Abbott was still amused. "Has she emptied me of all she wants?"

"Yes. You have given her strong weapons against me, and you may be sure she'll use them to her advantage."

"Fran, step back into the light—let me see your face; are you in earnest?"

Your eyes are smoldering—Oh, Fran, those eyes! What weapons have I given her?"

Fran set her back against the fence, and looked at him darkly. "The secret of my age, and the secret of my past."

"I told her neither."

"As soon as you and Mrs. Gregory wheeled away Mrs. Jefferson," said Fran, "I went right down from the choir loft, and straight over to her. I looked her in the eye, and I asked what you had been telling about me. Why, you told her everything, even that I was trying to find out whether you and I were ever—would ever get married! I might as well say it, it came pat enough from her—and you told! Nobody else knew. And you dropped your King of Hearts over the fence—you told her that! And when we were standing there at the gate, you even tried—but no, I'll leave you and Mrs. Gregory to discuss subjects. Here we are at the same gate, but I guess there's not much danger, now!"

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honor I didn't. I had to admit dropping the card, to keep her from thinking you out here at midnight with a stranger. She saw us in the shadow, and guessed—that other. I didn't tell her anything about your age. I didn't mention the carnival company."

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